



Midwest Miniature Guild

Guild Newsletter

February 2021

President's Letter

February 2021

Dear Friends,

Every day I'm grateful for MMG and our miniature hobby. It has been a year since we last met as a group, and yet I feel as if I know many of you better than I did when we were meeting in person. It has been rewarding getting to know members through our Zoom gatherings, email exchanges, and phone calls. I encourage everyone who needs a boost to join our Saturday Zoom meetings. Going forward we will meet regularly on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of the month at 9:30 a.m.

As you know, we have cancelled our February meeting, but we remain hopeful for May. Meanwhile, we hope to offer more miniature-making, buying, and sharing opportunities in 2021. We have business to conduct in February with the election of two officers – Vice President and Secretary. We will conduct an online election via Survey Monkey. (See the article on page 2 about our two candidates and how to vote.)

Here are some upcoming events and opportunities to participate in:

1. Online auction. The impetus for this began when our Iowa members were tasked with distributing Steve and Betty Dann's remaining miniature supplies. Our member, Beth Grabau, is assisting. (See her article on page 4 about the Danns.) We hope to include other items from other donors. If you would like to donate something for the auction, please contact me. We'll also need a team of people to organize and facilitate the auction. It's a great way to get more involved on a limited basis. And we need you!
2. Online workshop – We've got one in mind, but details need to be worked out yet. Stay tuned! If you have an idea for a workshop, send me an email.
3. Continuing Zoom Share and Social – twice a month. We have several regulars—you could be one of them.
4. Some of our members received and finished their Four-sided Display project that was offered last year. If you have finished yours, would you be willing to send me photos, so we could send directly to our members this winter?
5. Facebook postings. You can help the Guild by posting your pictures.

Please stay in touch. Tell us about your challenges, successes, ideas, and any items of interest. I will send out notices as I get them.

Mini-On!

Rebecca

rbrydenmmg@gmail.com

2021 BOARD ELECTIONS

Our election this year will be conducted online using Survey Monkey. We will send the survey notice/link in a separate email after this Newsletter is sent to the entire membership. After you click on the link, you will get a ballot. Fill it out and Send. Your vote will be anonymous. The voting process will be open for three days.

The MMG Nominating Committee is pleased to introduce the candidates for the 2021 MMG open positions.

EVA DONAGHUE IS OUR NOMINEE FOR VICE PRESIDENT



I've always loved tiny things as far back as I can remember. Growing up we didn't have much money to spend so we made a lot of things by hand with what we had available. I learned to crochet at an early age from my mom and grandma, crocheting Barbie clothes for my dolls, and then saving my allowance to build my own house with my dad and mom's help. Before I knew what polymer clay was, we made bread dough. Basically, bread smashed with glycerin and glue. I don't have any of that left as a field mouse got into my dollhouse and sat there eating it all in my doll's kitchen. Needless to say, he was trapped shortly after.

I've never stopped creating things in mini and life scale. I'm self-taught through books and experimentation. We lived in the country, but the Internet enabled me to connect with other miniaturists; one was Carol Dyson. Carol told me about this great group of people that got together three times a year to visit with each other and learn about and make miniatures. She invited me to come and in 2003 I attended my first meeting. I was hooked after that.

I love working in all scales, all the way down to 144th. I crochet in sewing thread in all three scales 1", 1/2", 1/4". I also love working in clays. Porcelain is one of my favorites. I make porcelain dolls and finally turned my passion into my job. I also am a certified mini electrician. I love teaching.

I created the anniversary porcelain plates and pitchers for the Guild's 25th anniversary; and I was in charge of our junior members sleepover at the 25th celebration at the Mermaid. I've made exchange minis and I've taught several classes for MMG over the years—learning from each one. I've worked on table favors with the Daisy Do Littles. I also served on the board for a few years as well as helped anyone who needed assistance.

Eva has been a member since 2004 and is also a MMG business member.

Elections continues on the next page

LISA KETCHMARK IS OUR NOMINEE FOR SECRETARY



I became interested in miniatures through my grandma Mildred (Dot) Gruetzman, who was a charter member of MMG. I remember looking at her room boxes and wanting to climb in. Auntie Jeanne (Fish) built my first dollhouse for me. I fondly remember it as I spent many hours playing and rearranging furniture. Later, my grandpa built a "grown up" dollhouse. I was able to help build it, and I made a fireplace using special rocks collected at my favorite camping place. I still have it today. In the past I served as co-librarian. It would be an honor to serve the Guild as secretary in memory of my grandma, as I work to continue her sharing her passion for miniatures with the younger generations.

Lisa has been a member since 2004.

Thank you to the nominating committee – Jeanne Fish and Priscilla Scott.

DATES TO REMEMBER

MMG Share and Social ZOOM:
2nd & 4th Saturdays each month 9:30 a.m.

MMG May Meeting (we hope):
May 1, 2021

Tom Bishop Chicago International (we hope):
July 16-18, 2021

NAME National Convention: Indianapolis, IN
2022

FINANCES

\$40,171.21. – 01/07/2021 balance

MMG - NEW MEMBER

Despite the COVID lockdown and no meetings for almost a year, we are happy to announce that MMG has a new member, Tracy Giza. Tracy and her daughter were contestants on HGTV's "The Biggest Little Christmas Showdown". When we realized that she was from Northfield, MN, we contacted her to tell her about the Midwest Miniature Guild. She, in turn, told us the low-down about her experience of building a dollhouse under pressure on a TV show. Tracy joined us on MMG's Share and Social ZOOM meeting. Welcome to the Midwest Miniature Guild, Tracy!



THE BETTY AND STEVE DANN STORY

By Beth Grabau



The Dann name may not be familiar to the newer members of the miniature community today, but the support Betty and Steve Dann gave to the hobby should not be forgotten. Betty's sister, Eileen, sparked Betty's interest in miniatures. Not long after she and her husband, Steve, were all in!

It is hard to give a description of the Dann's contributions to the miniature hobby. First, they had a miniature supply business which offered all the items you needed to make just about anything miniature. They offered wood trimmings, wallpaper, glues, bunka, books, flocking, electrical items, kits, and so much more. They were at miniature shows, conventions and any and all other miniature events, mostly east of the Mississippi River. You would find them standing behind at least two packed sales tables that stood taller than the Danns themselves. If they didn't have it, you didn't need it.

The Danns helped to start many miniature clubs and held many meetings in their home. Betty hosted artisans in Des Moines, who taught new skills to miniaturists. The Danns were members of MMG, NAME, and attended workshops hosted by IGMA in Castine, Maine.

Betty developed and offered registered workshops and roundtables at NAME house parties. She ALWAYS "encouraged" club members to make tote bag favors and door prizes for these events. Betty served as the NAME Iowa State Rep for a number of years.

Betty passed roughly 15 years ago. The WEST Miniature Club continued to meet at the Dann's home until Steve entered a memory care facility just prior the COVID lockdown.

Betty and Steve's sons were not sure what to do with all the remaining miniatures; most had not been touched since Betty's death. It was then that the WEST Miniature Club in Des Moines offered to assist the family with any miniatures that remained in the home. We are thankful to the Dann family for their large donation of miniatures and are working to honor their wishes.

When you participate in the online auction and you see items donated by the Danns, you will know that they came from a couple who loved and worked to promote the miniature hobby.

BUSINESS MEMBER FOCUS
CHRISTINE OLSON – OWNER OF MINIATURECRUSH
INTERVIEW BY REBECCA BRYDEN



Occasionally we like to profile a MMG Business Member. Christine Olson joined MMG in 2017, and owns MiniatureCrush, an online store.

Tell us about your interest in miniatures and how did you find out about MMG?

My interest in miniatures started when I was ten and visited the Thorne Rooms in Chicago. Right then and there I wanted a "real" dollhouse with everything 1:12 scale. I saved up my money for a year and bought a Walmer Yorktown. I still have my Walmer today and am working on redoing it. My 11-year-old self didn't quite have the know-how to create the images I had in my head of how I wanted it to look.

I found MMG through a Google search. I was looking for miniature groups in the area where I could connect with others in the hobby.

How, When, or Why did you start MiniatureCrush?

I started MiniatureCrush in 2017 after pulling my Walmer out of the back room; I hadn't touched it in nearly 30 years. The previous 20 years I had been selling books online and I briefly opened a bookstore in Burnsville, but the book business was changing, and sales were falling off fast. I had to close down my book warehouse, cut way back on inventory and move everything back home. Once I started working on my Walmer, I asked myself "Could I sell miniatures online?" I walked away from the book business and never looked back.

Do you design and cut your own products?

Yes, I design some of my own products and I plan to create more in the future. Today, 90% of what I sell are other people's items, both mass produced (e.g., Houseworks, Town Square) and from artisans and makers like Sir Thomas Thumb and Island Miniatures.

What's the hardest item for you to cut? Most popular? Your favorite?

I invested in a laser cutter a few years ago. I have advanced arthritis in my hands, and I wasn't able to use a craft knife like I used to. Now I am able to design products in graphics software (Inkscape) and cut them with ease. I love coming up with new creative designs. My miniatures 1:144 House Kits and 1:12 finished crates are the most popular. My favorite is a kitty cat rocking chair that I modeled after one I bought in the early 80s.

Business Focus continues on page 8

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Dear Members,

I am very sorry to report that our dear member, Carolyn Nelson, passed away due to COVID last Thursday. Both she and her husband, Roger, became infected a few weeks ago. Carolyn joined MMG in 2006 and was an enthusiastic and active member in our Guild. She will be deeply missed by her close group of miniaturists as well as all of us. Roger is still recovering.

I would also like to inform you of the passing of two other long-time former Guild members: Ann Fisher and Louise Howe. Both ladies were very active and contributed to the Guild for many years, but both were unable to continue membership due to health conditions. Ann and her husband Larry recently rejoined a few years ago, but she did not join last year. As far as I know, COVID was not a factor. I'm sure many of you remember both of them.

You can find an obituary for Ann in the StarTribune:

[Anna Mae Fisher Obituary | Star Tribune](#)

There was a brief announcement about Louise in the Pioneer Press (Legacy.com). Services will be held at a future date.

We are very grateful to have known them. We cherish their friendship, their joyful expression and love of miniatures, and their generous contributions to MMG.

Warmly,

Rebecca

MMG BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FEBRUARY 2021

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By Kathleen Stewart



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Business Focus continued from page 5

What do you think about the miniature business and hobby?

One thing that is fun is that I involve both my mom and my 16-year-old son; they are creative types. My mom makes mini-framed prints, some of them from original paintings which she has done over the years. My son helps me create designs for the laser cutter and has hand-drawn some mini pictures, he is also working with 3D printer ideas.

From what I have seen, the miniature hobby is growing. During this pandemic, people are looking for something to do at home that lets them be creative. The Internet is a huge driving force behind miniatures. You have Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube. People can share their work, and this inspires others to do the same. I love it when I follow customers on Instagram and I can see how they used what they bought.

I currently work out of an office in downtown Savage. I am not open to the public, but maybe when the pandemic has calmed down, I could allow people to pick-up orders in person or even take a look at items before they purchase. I am looking forward to the day when MMG can start the meetings back up and get the energy flowing in person again. Online is convenient but it's not the same as 75 people with the same interest in a room together.

How can members contact you?

www.miniaturecrush.com; Facebook: miniaturecrush; Instagram: miniaturecrush; Pinterest: miniaturecrush; Etsy: MiniatureCrush (see ad on page 9)

Rebecca Bryden: "I recently completed a MiniatureCrush original: An Art Deco house 1/144". I'll also add that delivery was very quick." (See photo below on left.)



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